

**Statement by the Honorable Ivan Makil  
President, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community  
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearing on S. 343  
May 8, 2002**

Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Campbell, members of the Committee, fellow tribal leaders, and distinguished guests, I am Ivan Makil, President of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community near Phoenix, Arizona. Our Community of some 7,800 members, predates Arizona as a state. Yet, in the last 50 years, urban growth has come to us.

Today, we are surrounded by metropolitan Phoenix and border Tempe, Scottsdale, Mesa and Fountain hills. A contemporary but still traditional Indian community, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community is concerned about our physical, social, economic and spiritual development. Like other tribal communities in this country, we are very aware that future generations of our people will live with the results of the decisions we make today. It is critical, therefore, that we make the very best decisions that we can.

We are fortunate, because, as we plan for the world that the next Seven Generations will inherit, our community enjoys an important advantage. That advantage enables us to make better decisions. We are one of 260 tribes in this country that has self-governance.

Our road to self-governance began at the same time that President Richard Nixon launched self-determination in 1970. That action, as you know, led to the Indian Self Determination & Education Act of 1975. We entered our first contract in 1970 for our Police Department. This act set us on track for self-determination and self-governance. Since that initial contract, we have grown to be an active self-governing tribe.

Today, we have more than three decades experience with this system. I would like to take a few moments to talk to you about our experience and why we believe that the principles contained in S. 343, which authorizes a demonstration project for expanded self-governance, is such a necessary and positive step for tribes. As introduced

by Senator Campbell, it establishes a demonstration project that authorizes the integration and coordination of Federal funding dedicated to the community, business, and economic development of Native American communities.

It is significant that this approach is both systematic and holistic. Systematic is critical for functionality and efficiency. Holistic, however, is equally important, as our culture teaches us to view the world as an integrated place. This bill is systematic as it will create a block grant fund from revenues available in 15 different federal agencies, agencies that do not have as their normal priority dealing with Native American tribes. It is holistic in that by combining diverse Federal agency dollars, it encourages tribes to take the wider, rather than narrow, view.

Realistically, it would allow tribes to pool available federal funds to meet the needs of their people in more effective ways. It would also put new resources into the hands of tribal leaders who can pool these dollars and use them more effectively to create opportunities and solve problems for their people.

Over the past 30 years, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian has done just that.

In the 1980s, we were the first tribe to develop a major shopping center on our land in Arizona. To accomplish this, we put together more than 300 different landowners with a developer and created the Pavilions Shopping Center. We could not have done this without the opportunities available under the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act. Wherever we have had an ability to integrate the process, we have done so and improved the process. Integration has enabled us to create more positive results.

For example, the image you see compares our unique lease process to full-service tribes. The yellow highlighted areas show the steps that Salt River takes when securing leases such as for the Pavilions.

Compare this process to the steps, marked in green that a non-self-governance tribe must go through. Even a quick glance shows that Salt River has taken over the functions in land development process previously handled by

the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Moreover, we do this process more efficiently and effectively and in economic development, time is money.

As we have taken over management of our own resources, we established a realty database and a compatible geographic information system. As a result, we can track ownership for every fractionated piece of land owned by heirs.

We can also show them exactly where their land is. And most importantly, we can – and do – issue lease payment checks to our members.

Now, more than a decade after developing the Pavilions Shopping Center, the Community council has embarked upon a sophisticated strategic planning process to help us determine our future. As part of this lengthy process, we are gathering information that is enabling us to identify our critical areas of interest. As the decision-makers and managers for our Community, our commitment to strategic planning is helping us design our future.

To make sure that this future is healthy – physically, socially, economically and spiritually – we are setting priorities today that will guide our tomorrow. Because these priorities are consistent with our overall goal, we can be assured that everyone – the Community as a whole and each individual member – will be best-served.

From our experience, I have no doubt that each federal program was an excellent idea when it was created. Problems began as each developed with its own set of blinders. Because each program grew as its own entity –without any way to leverage other like-minded programs or even an acknowledgment of duplication – federal programs designed to help Indian people have often created new problems for us.

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has created its own destiny. We saw opportunities and made things happen for ourselves. Over the years, our Community has developed sophisticated expertise. But, not all tribes have this kind of knowledge close at hand.

I urge you, as you design this demonstration program, to incorporate flexibility and time enough so this project can prove itself. Recognize that because not all tribes have local expertise, some will need to look outside their own membership for technical support and staffing. Given enough time and an assurance of flexibility, our tribes can grow their own economies and nurture the kinds of expertise they need to succeed.

I urge you to fully support S. 343, which requires 15 federal agencies to take an historic step to work together with tribes that wish to be part of this demonstration project. It is critical, however, that any tribe that joins this project be required to demonstrate how they are planning to use these revenues. Tribes must create a plan that serves their entire Community.

I know this bill may need to be amended to address certain concerns as it goes through the process. My staff stands ready to assist the Committee in making this the best possible legislation for Indian country.

The Federal government needs the ability to have a systemic and holistic approach to deal with tribes. Tribes need you as a partner. If you are going to take on this effort, I urge you to do it right. Make the demonstration real and make it multi-year so all of us have time enough to achieve results. I also urge you to established priority funding for this effort so that it has every chance for success.

Both the integration of the 15 agencies and the holistic planning exercise are essential; the process cannot work unless both are in place. By supporting this systematic and holistic approach to planning and funding, S. 343 can become a valuable tool to help tribes design and develop their own destiny. I urge you to commit to this thoughtful and far-reaching bill.

Mr. Chairman, thanks again for the opportunity to testify in support of S. 343. I would be happy to remain here to answer any questions you or the Committee members may have.